

The way fires are fought 100 years after this man said this is different than the way they used to be fought, but it still takes a great deal of courage and many times heroism to go forward in these areas where burning is taking place.

So far, 245 square miles in northern Nevada have burned. That is a lot of ground: 245 square miles. Some of the fires are not under control yet. So I want the RECORD to reflect we have problems in the West. Some say it is because of global warming. Whatever the reason, we have never had fires such as we have had in the last 4 years in Nevada and I think in the West, generally.

So I would finally say, long after the smoke has cleared, the accounts of bravery will still be told in Nevada.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION AMENDMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say briefly, the majority leader has it entirely right, we are in the process of discussing a consent agreement under which the Webb amendment would be voted upon and the alternative, which will be offered by Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, who will be over to speak shortly.

Hopefully, we will be able to work that out and begin to make progress on the bill.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the first half of the time under the control of the Republicans and the second half of the time under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I believe I have been yielded 15 minutes of the next half hour.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator may proceed.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair.

IRAQ

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the pending busi-

ness before the Senate, which is the Department of Defense authorization bill for fiscal year 2008.

This is a bill the Senate Armed Services Committee has worked long and hard on over a period of several months. I am privileged to be a member of the committee and now doubly privileged to be chair of the Airland Subcommittee. I am proud of the work of the committee.

This is a bill that does the best we possibly can to support and expand our forces during a time of war. Unfortunately, most of the time that will be spent by this Chamber on this bill will not be about the solid substance of the Department of Defense authorization bill but will be on a series of amendments that will be offered to alter our course or force our withdrawal from Iraq.

In my considered opinion, respectfully, this is a mistake. These amendments regarding Iraq, I believe, are untimely, they are unwise, and they are unfair.

They are untimely in the sense that they are premature and should await September, when, as ordained by this Congress itself in the supplemental appropriations bill, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will come back to report to us fully.

They are unwise, if ever adopted, because they would essentially represent a retreat from Iraq, a defeat for the United States and the forces of a new Iraq, a free Iraq, and a tremendous victory for Iran and al-Qaida, who are our two most significant enemies in the world today.

Offering these amendments at this time, in my opinion, is unfair: unfair, most of all, to the 160,000 Americans in uniform over there—men and women, brave, effective, in my opinion, the new greatest generation of American soldiers, committed to this fight, believing we can win it, putting their lives on the line every day. They have made tremendous progress already in the so-called surge, counteroffensive. To snipe at them from here is, in my opinion, unfair.

That is why I will oppose all the amendments I have heard about thus far and why I wish to discuss them today.

I suppose, in terms of timeliness, if one felt the surge, counteroffensive—which began in February, and has just been fully staffed a couple of weeks ago—had absolutely failed, then one might say: OK, we won't wait until September, as we promised we would do; we will try to force a change in policy or a retreat right now. But the facts, as I will discuss, will show the surge is showing some success—in some ways some remarkable success—and does not justify these amendments of retreat being offered at this time.

Six months ago, this Chamber voted unanimously to confirm GEN David Petraeus as commander of our forces in Iraq. The fact is—which we all acknowledge—before that, the adminis-

tration had followed a strategy in Iraq that simply was not working. It was a strategy focused on keeping the U.S. force presence as small as possible, regardless of conditions on the ground, and of pushing Iraqi forces into the lead as quickly as possible, regardless of their capabilities to do so.

General Petraeus oversaw—let me step back. General Petraeus was part of a process, along with others, that presented a dramatically different strategy to the President of the United States, the Commander in Chief. He accepted that dramatically different strategy, which was to apply classic principles of counterinsurgency that have been successful elsewhere, so that instead of our main goal being to get out of Iraq, our main goal became to protect the civilian population that the terrorists were persistently attacking, bringing chaos throughout the country, including particularly in the capital city of Baghdad, and making it impossible for a new Iraqi Government to take shape.

As a result, over the past 5 months, many problems, many crises, many challenges in Iraq that had long been described as hopelessly beyond solution have begun to improve. In Baghdad, the sectarian violence that had paralyzed the city for more than a year began to drop dramatically. In Anbar Province, which the chief of Marine Corps intelligence in Iraq described 9 months ago as “lost”—and he was right at that point—a city which I was not allowed to visit when I went to Iraq in December because it was too dangerous—our surge forces have moved in effectively.

Working together with Sunni tribal leaders and their Sunni followers, we have al-Qaida on the run. As a matter of fact, they have effectively run from Anbar Province, the province they said they intended to make the capital of the new Islamist extremist Republic of Iraq.

When I was in Iraq a month ago, I was not only allowed to visit Ramadi and walk its streets but was tremendously impressed by the peace and rebirth that is occurring there.

As John Burns of the New York Times recently put it, the capital city of Anbar, Ramadi, has since “gone from being the most dangerous place in Iraq . . . to being one of the least dangerous places.” Despite these gains in Baghdad and Anbar, critics of the new strategy nonetheless insisted that it was not working, pointing to the fact that, yes, al-Qaida is on the run, but it is running and causing devastation in other parts of Iraq—now in Diyala Province, for instance.

But what happened? General Petraeus, now with the other generals and additional personnel brought under his command by the surge counteroffensive strategy, was able to leave some troops in Anbar, fortified by Iraqi security forces and the Sunni tribal forces, and move the surge forces to Diyala, to Bakuba there, where they now have al-Qaida on the run.

Our forces in the field are, of course, still facing some daunting challenges and a brutal, inhumane foe prepared to blow themselves up to make a point, to kill others, hating us and others more than they love their own lives. But the plain truth is that Iraq in this month, July 2007, is a very different and better place than Iraq in January or February of 2000, and it is because of the so-called surge counteroffensive strategy. Those who refuse to recognize that change and nonetheless go forward with the same policies of defeat and withdrawal that they have been talking about for months have, I would say respectfully, closed their eyes, not to mention their heads, to the reality of what is actually happening on the ground in Iraq.

General Petraeus has persistently appealed to us to have some patience, to not rush to judgment about the success or failure of a new surge strategy. It is only right that we do so. But instead of respecting those pleas, withholding our judgment, and remaining true to what we ourselves put into the supplemental appropriations bill, which was a requirement for an interim report this week and a full report on paper about the benchmarks and in person by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in September, instead of waiting for that to happen, I regret that some of my colleagues have decided to go ahead and submit these amendments which, to me, represent the continuation of a longtime legislative trench warfare against our presence in Iraq no matter what the facts on the ground there are. Rather than giving General Petraeus and his troops a fair chance to succeed—and it is not just for them, it is for us—I regret that efforts will be made here to undermine our strategy, which is now a successful strategy in Iraq, to dictate when, where, and against whom our soldiers can fight and when we should get out.

I suppose this would be justified if somebody concluded that the war was lost in Iraq. The war is not lost in Iraq. In fact, now American and Iraqi security forces are winning. The enemy is on the run in Iraq. But here in Congress, in Washington, we seem to be—or some Members seem to be on the run—chased, I fear, by public-opinion polls.

I know the American people are frustrated. I understand that. I know what they see every night on the TV, the suicide bombs. I know how much they want their loved ones to come home. No one wants that more than we do here. But the consequences of doing that would be a disaster for Iraq, the Middle East, and for us because the victors would be Iran and al-Qaida, our two most dangerous enemies in the world today, and trust me, they would follow us back here to this country.

I said one might pursue a policy of changing course, directing a retreat, a withdrawal, accepting defeat if one thought the war was lost. The war is not lost. In fact, I will say to my col-

leagues today that this war in Iraq will never be lost by our military on the ground in Iraq. The war in Iraq can only be lost with the loss of political will here at home and, perhaps, with the loss of political will in Iraq. But that story is not finished yet.

Perhaps there are some who would say the war is not lost but it is not worth winning. I think we have to think of the consequences of defeat. I know that in the midst of the consequences of defeat are a victory for Iran and al-Qaida, chaos in Iraq, slaughter that will probably begin to look like genocide, instability in the region, and the danger that we will be forced to send our troops back into the region in greater numbers to fight a more difficult war.

I think the amendments on Iraq to be offered on this Department of Defense bill are mistaken. What are the alternatives my colleagues are going to propose in these amendments? One of the amendments would demand a total withdrawal of American troops from Iraq as quickly as possible. Its sponsors argue that we can continue to fight al-Qaida in Iraq and defend our other key interests in the Middle East by operating from bases elsewhere there. With all due respect, this is fantasy.

As my friend, Senator LUGAR, pointed out a short while ago, a complete American withdrawal from Iraq is likely to have devastating consequences for American national security. Everyone knows Senator LUGAR is a skeptic about our strategy and events in Iraq. Yet, in his words, a complete withdrawal from Iraq would:

Compound the risks of a wider regional conflict. It would be a severe blow to U.S. credibility that would make nations in the region far less likely to cooperate with us. It would expose Iraqis who have worked with us to retribution, and it would also be a signal that the United States was abandoning efforts to prevent Iraqi territory from being used as a terrorist base.

So spoke the distinguished Senator from Indiana, Mr. LUGAR.

Another amendment would keep some forces in Iraq, pull most forces out by next April 1. Their numbers would be dramatically reduced and the mission dramatically redefined.

Some argue that American soldiers should withdraw from Iraq's cities and instead focus on the training of Iraqi forces, targeting counterterrorism, and protecting the remaining American troops there. Let me say that is a vision I would embrace for the future but not as a substitute for the surge counteroffensive strategy we are following now but as a consequence of a successful implementation of that strategy, for if we in this Chamber and in Congress mandate the withdrawal of our troops down to a core group with a new mission before the Iraqi security forces are ready to provide security, we are going back to the exact strategy some describe as the Rumsfeld strategy which didn't work, which was roundly condemned by most people in both parties over a period of years.

I repeat my confidence that the number of American troops will be reduced, but it will be reduced best when it is reduced as a result of the successful implementation of the surge strategy as carried out heroically by American forces.

I conclude with these words: Our responsibilities in this Chamber ultimately do not allow us to be guided by our frustrations or even by public-opinion polls when we respectfully believe those public-opinion polls do not reflect what is best for our Nation. We were elected to lead. We were elected to see beyond the next election, to do what is best for the next generation of Americans. We were elected to defend our beloved country, its security, and its values. All of that is on the line in Iraq today.

So I appeal to my colleagues, let's not undercut our troops and legislate a defeat in Iraq where none is occurring now, where hope is strong, where the momentum is, in fact, on our side. If you question that, at least show the fairness and respect for General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, and all the people working for us there to wait until September, which is what we said we would do, until we take a serious look at these amendments. If we go down the path the amendments entice us toward, what awaits us is an emboldened Iran, a strengthened al-Qaida, a failed Iraq that will become not just a killing field but will destabilize the entire Middle East and also, I fear, imperil our security here at home.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I believe I have 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

IRAQ POLICY

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I appreciate being recognized. Before my good friend, Senator LIEBERMAN, departs the floor, I will make one observation about him that I think needs to be said. This winning/losing is a big part of wars; it is a big part of politics. Everybody wants to win, and people are afraid to lose. But I have found in life there are some things that are worth fighting for and willing to lose your job over, and to me the policies in Iraq fall into that category because it is much more important in my election that we get it right in Iraq, and from Senator LIEBERMAN's point of view—I don't think I have seen in modern politics anyone more committed to their beliefs than Senator LIEBERMAN when it comes to a foreign policy issue like Iraq. We all know the story of his last election, how he basically lost a primary because he refused to give in to the forces on the left when it came to the war on terror policies, particularly